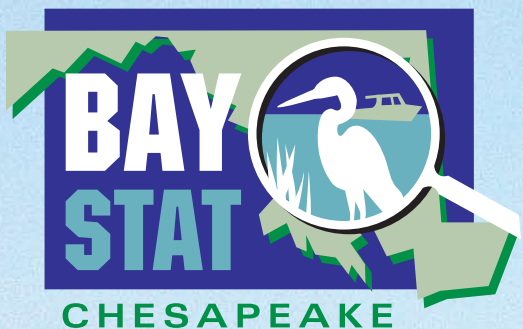


# BAY & WATERWAY



## *Bringing the Bay's Health into Focus*

by Kate Nunley



**T**he Chesapeake Bay is arguably our most important natural resource, the long time focus of our most diligent restoration and preservation work. Still, despite the best efforts of a continuum of public and private partners, the Bay continues to suffer from environmentally irresponsible activities.

But a unique form of help is on the way, via an innovative new data collection and evaluation tool currently under development: **BayStat**. This new component to our efforts to build a cleaner, healthier Maryland will forever change the way we evaluate the health of the Chesapeake Bay, providing state agencies

the information they need to track, coordinate, target and refine restoration efforts.

### A Statewide Initiative

On February 14, 2007, Governor Martin O'Malley created **BayStat** by executive order. Based on the **CitiStat** program created by the Governor in Baltimore six years ago, **BayStat** will advance accountability and coordination among key government agencies.

The chief function of **BayStat** will be to evaluate state initiatives directed at improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay on a regular basis, to ensure these programs are coordinated and operating at the highest efficiency.

### Tracking the Bay

Unlike **StateStat** — another new program that will apply similar methods to monitor the performance of individual state agencies — **BayStat** will cut across disciplines at the Departments of Agriculture, Environment, Natural Resources and Planning to assess Chesapeake Bay related activities. By tapping into the information and resources of these four agencies, as well as the University of Maryland, **BayStat** will be able to provide a much clearer picture of the current status of the Bay, predict future threats, and help scientists learn how one seemingly unrelated restoration program influences others.





**BayStat** will evaluate data about water quality, nutrient and sediment loads, biotic integrity, fish species, wetlands and forest buffers. This data will help the State target resources and programs, including those designed to reduce atmospheric pollution reaching the Bay, help Maryland farmers use pollution-reducing methods, improve wastewater treatment facilities, determine the impact of development on the environment and enforce laws regulating pollution.

Monthly meetings among the Governor, staff and cabinet secretaries are already underway, driving both the development of **BayStat** and allowing for in-depth discussion

of the Bay's complex challenges. These meetings will ultimately provide the venue for reviewing performance on Bay restoration programs and making decisions on how to improve that performance.

### Informing the Public

**BayStat** will also bring more transparency to the business of restoring the Bay. Once fully implemented, **BayStat's** website will keep citizens up-to-date, reporting on the health of Chesapeake, its tributaries and the status of State programs and decision-making. The public will be able to access candid interpretations of the Bay's health and the

effectiveness of the State programs that address it, as well as monitor setbacks and successes.

As a matter of public responsibility, Maryland's government and its citizens have an obligation to protect the Bay. **BayStat** will allow government and citizens to track the progress being made on improvements to this precious resource, and help design a new path for navigating the multifaceted, interconnected State programs to aid the Bay. ♦

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